

BUDDHISM IN A NUTSHELL

Buddhism illustrates the teachings that The Supreme Buddha explained to the world which emphasizes getting rid of suffering and attaining supreme happiness. Even though we say that this is the Buddha's message because of his discovery, in actuality it is the reality of the world. Whether a Buddha arises or not, this world reality is everlasting. We respect the Buddha, because he discovered this reality by himself without the assistance of others and preached it to the world. However his teachings don't belong to him. All Buddhas who arise in this universe during certain periods of time discover this very same message and kindly preach it to the world.

If someone hopes to practice this message and obtain results during one's lifespan, he should first cultivate three good qualities which are intelligence, honesty and loving kindness. As much as someone has these personal traits and if he listens to that message, then he can gain the result which is real happiness. Buddhism invites the world '**come and see**' it. But it never says '**come and believe**'. This is where, Buddhism differs from other teachings. The believing or not believing of this teaching depends on the level of one's knowledge, understanding, comprehension, intelligence and analysis.

There are a lot of teachings and techniques in Buddhism that we can practice in order to achieve happiness. Various intellectuals have interpreted this message in many different ways. However, all teachings in Buddhism can be divided into three levels as follows:

1. The teachings that gain results to succeed in this life

Everybody likes to live with happiness and without difficulties in this life. Therefore, Buddhism says to practice four things which are education, personal wealth (or employment), health and morality (or virtue). Some people think that Buddhism is only for the hereafter (or next birth) not for this life. We can practice Buddha's teachings and can gain the results in this life as well as the hereafter. A lot of teachings in Buddhism relate to succeed this birth. Succeeding in this first step is similar to obtaining a bachelors' degree.

2. The teachings that gain results to succeed the hereafter

The three meritorious deeds of generosity (*dana*), virtue (*seela*) and meditation (*bhavana*) cause us to succeed in this life and thereafter. If a person has done a lot of meritorious deeds in this life, it means that his mind is rich in merits. A Meritorious mind can gain happiness. When we do good deeds, it means our mind is pure, calm and quiet. A pure mind can bring happiness to our life. Succeeding in this second step is similar to obtaining a masters' degree.

3. The teachings that gain results to succeed in the present moment getting rid of all sufferings

Virtue, concentration or tranquility and wisdom with understanding of dependent origination cause us to get rid of all sufferings and develop real happiness. Virtue means a very high level discipline in behavior and speech with right vision. With good discipline if a person focuses his mind in a particular meritorious object such as loving kindness and breathing meditation, then he can concentrate his mind with pure thoughts. With that concentration, if one has to reflect on the world reality according to impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and selflessness (*anatta*) in the correct way, As a result, one can live without desire and hatred because there is no delusion. When he investigates that present moment he has only present moment as nothing comes to the present from the past and nothing goes to the future from the present. He sees very well the arising and disappearing of all his experiences at the moment. Then he can live as a person seeing the truth in a new fresh way. This is the ultimate truth that Buddhism teaches us to be able to get rid of all sufferings. Succeeding in this third step is similar to obtaining a doctorate (PhD) which is the highest degree in any subject.